

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DAMASC 01471 041351Z
ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2046

UNCLAS DAMASCUS 1471

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: AFSP, CGEN, SY
SUBJECT: DAMASCUS CONSULAR LOAD AND STAFFING

REF: (A) DAMASCUS 1329 (B) 76 STATE 309343 (C) STATE
176506

1. WHILE DAMASCUS SHOULD PHASE OUT ISSUANCE OF IV'S TO RESIDENTS OF LEBANON BY APRIL 1, EXCEPT IN EMERGENCY CASES, INCREASE IN SYRIAN WORKLOAD, PARTLY AS RESULT OF CONTINUING EFFECTS OF EVENTS IN LEBANON, NECESSITATE CONTINUATION OF TWO PIT POSITIONS AUTHORIZED REF B WITH MANY ACTIVE IV CASES ON FILE HERE, WE WILL ALSO BE OFFERING SOME IV SERVICES TO RESIDENTS OF LEBANON FOR SEVERAL MONTHS AFTER APRIL 1. BEIRUT FSL'S WILL RETURN TO BEIRUT AT END OF MARCH.

2. AS RESULT OF INCREASED COMMERCIAL AND OTHER CONTACTS WITH U.S. AND RELOCATION OF SYRIANS ONCE RESIDENT IN LEBANON BACK TO SYRIA ON ACCOUNT OF EVENTS AND POOR ECONOMIC PROSPECTS THERE FOR FORESEEABLE FUTURE, VISA WORKLOAD HERE JUST FOR RESIDENTS OF SYRIA IS FROM 30 TO 50 PER CENT HIGHER THAN TOTAL DAMASCUS WORKLOAD PRIOR TO SUSPENSION OF VISA SERVICES IN BEIRUT. FOR EXAMPLE, IN FEBRUARY '76 WE HANDLED TOTAL OF 130 NIV CASES. IN FEBRUARY '77 WE HANDLED APPROX. 200 CASES FOR RESIDENTS OF SYRIA. THE IV WORKLOAD
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OF APPROX. 70 CASES FOR RESIDENTS OF SYRIA THIS PAST MONTH COMPARES WITH TOTAL ISSUANCE OF 18 IN FEBRUARY '76. DURING 1ST HALF OF MARCH WE HAVE SCHEDULED 55 FINAL IV APPOINTMENTS FOR RESIDENTS OF SYRIA.

3. ADDITION TO PURELY SYRIAN CASES, WE WILL STILL HAVE TO DEAL WITH MANY RESIDENTS OF LEBANON AFTER

APRIL 1. WHILE ISSUANCE OF IV'S TO LEBANESE HAS FALLEN OFF NOTICEABLY IN LAST MONTH AS RESULT OF EXPEDITIOUS ISSUANCE TO THOSE WHO WISH PURSUE THEIR CASES AT PRESENT, WE STILL HAVE AN ESTIMATED 500 LEBANESE IV CASES ON FILE HERE. TOWARDS END OF SCHOOL YEAR AND AS SUMMER TRAVEL MONTHS APPROACH, WE EXPECT TO RECEIVE MANY INQUIRES CONCERNING PROCESSING OF CASES EITHER HERE OR IN BEIRUT FROM THOSE WHOSE CASES ARE ON FILE HERE. EXCEPT FOR CASES OF EMERGENCY, WE WOULD COORDINATE WITH BEIRUT FOR TRANSFER OF FILES FOR ISSUANCE THERE. THIS, OF COURSE, WOULD STILL INVOLVE CORRESPONDANCE HANDLING MANY WALK-IN INQUIRES AND CHECKING OF DOCUMENTS. BY TIME BULK OF SUCH TRANSFERS ARRANGED, WE SHOULD BE WELL INTO NORMAL SUMMER RUSH SEASON WHEN WE WOULD NORMALLY REQUEST ONE PIT POSITION.

4. IN REF C SCA STATED THAT ONE ADDITIONAL PERMANENT FSL POSITION WOULD BE REQUESTED FOR CONSULAR SECTION HERE STARTING FY '78. IN VIEW OF ABOVE DISCUSSION OF WORKLOAD, DEPARTMENT IS REQUESTED TO AUTHORIZE EXTENSION OF ONE PIT POSITION FOR ADDITIONAL THREE MONTHS AND CONVERSION OF OTHER PIT POSITION TO PERMANENT POSITION NOW RATHER START OF FY '78. BOTH PIT POSITIONS EXPIRE MARCH 8. IF LATTER REQUEST NOT FEASIBLE NOW, PLEASE AUTHORIZE EXTENSION OF SECOND PIT POSITION FOR PERIOD LONG ENOUGH TO PROCESS CONVERSION TO PERMANENT FSL STATUS. PERMANENT FSL POSITION WOULD BE SECRETARY WITH MAXIMUM FSL-5 GRADE.
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